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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/728,351

12/04/2003

Randy Miller

1663-6

8612

7590

07/24/2008

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EXAMINER

HARPER, TRAMAR YONG

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3714

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

07/24/2008

PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b> 10/728,351	<b>Applicant(s)</b> MILLER, RANDY	
	<b>Examiner</b> TRAMAR HARPER	<b>Art Unit</b> 3714	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 April 2008.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-26 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-26 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)          | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                      |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)          | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Response to Amendment***

Examiner acknowledges receipt of amendment/arguments filed 04/21/08. The arguments set forth are addressed herein below. Claims 1-26 are pending and Claims 3, 7-10, and 14 have been amended.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

**Claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Walker et al (US 2002/0042296).**

**Claims 1 and 12-15:** Walker discloses a slot machine (includes video poker, video blackjack, and keno machines (§36)), in which a player places a wager to initiate a game of video poker (§ 84). If the final hand matches any of the bonus hands indicated in the bonus database and displayed on the gaming apparatus the player qualifies for a time dependent bonus game and the bonus game is initiated, otherwise play is repeated (§ 86-87; Fig. 5). The bonus initiating hands are also amongst the bonus hands needed to be obtained within the bonus (§ 86-89). If a bonus initiating hand is obtained bonus play timers are initiated and player(s) must obtain a predetermined number of equivalent bonus hands (e.g. the bonus initiating hands) within the predetermined time

period. Upon the bonus winning outcome a player is awarded a bonus payout (§ 92).

**Walker discloses that the a single player that obtains all of the hands necessary to fulfill the bonus conditions receives the only bonus or enhanced payout resulting from meeting the bonus conditions (§ 64). This is interpreted as a player can initiate the bonus and that player can receive the enhanced payout if the player fulfills the bonus conditions, which furthermore means that although in team play the outcomes correspond to a player achieving outcomes independently of the other players e.g. like stand-alone play (*a player can obtain a bonus initiating hand and play the bonus wherein the player has to obtain the equivalent hand within a predetermined time in order to obtain the bonus award*).**

Although Walker is primarily drawn to team play, no where does it suggest that the game including bonus **only** be drawn to team play. Furthermore, Walker discloses that in the event that the player does not choose to play in team play the player may engage in stand-alone play at the same machine (§ 55). Therefore, it is interpreted that, although not explicitly stated, Walker implies that in stand-alone mode a single player can play the bonus, as described above.

However, in the alternative one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would be motivated to modify the gaming device of Walker such that the bonus is playable in stand-alone mode, for providing a stand-alone bonus game for players that do not wish to participate in team play, as suggested by Walker (see above). **Walker clearly suggests an invention primarily drawn to providing a gaming environment for team play, but Walker does not exclude the fact that**

**some players prefer not to play in a team environment and would rather play in a stand-alone mode. Walker is not intended to take away the bonus from people with such preferences, but is intended to simply promote team play. However, provisions to accommodate players who prefer not to engage in team play would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.**

**Claims 2-7:** Walker's video poker game comprises of visual indicators of the bonus payout and the bonus timers. Once the bonus game is initiated the indicators are displayed and remain active until the bonus is won or there is no bonus time remaining (§ 89, 92; Figs. 5 & 11C). Fig. 11c illustrates how Walker's bonus game is intended to be implement. In the figure, one can see that the final outcome of the game is based on whether player(s) accomplished the required amount of bonus hands within prior to the bonus time period expiring. In the event that the amount the required amount is not achieved and the bonus time expires than the gaming system clears and resets the bonus condition measurements and displays (encompasses the timers). In the event the required amount is achieved and the bonus time is expired, than the gaming systems clears and resets the bonus condition measurements and displays. In the event the required amount is achieved and the bonus time has not expired, than the gaming system awards the appropriate bonus payouts. Although not explicit it is implied that after the award bonus has been payout than the game ends, which means the timer would stop, end, clear, and/or reset based on the flow chart of Fig. 11c.

**Claims 8-11:** If the final hand matches any of the bonus hands indicated in the bonus database and displayed on the gaming apparatus a bonus is initiated (§ 87; Fig. 5). If a

bonus initiating hand is obtained bonus play timers are initiated. In the embodiment anyone of the bonus initiating hands can initiate the bonus timer, but modifications such as limiting the activation of the timer to only one bonus hand is within the scope of the above teachings. Figure 5 illustrates a plurality of bonus timers with different values (¶ 89).

**Claims 16-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Walker (US 2002/0042296) in view of the Stupak (US 5,851,147).**

**Claims 16-17:** Walker teaches all the limitations as taught above, except the use of a first payout display. Walker discloses that the first payout is determined by using a payout table derived from the payout database (Col. 12:49-51). Also, Fig. 5 illustrates the display of the enhanced payout table, which is also cleared when a bonus is not commencing. It is known in the art to display a payout table in video poker. Stupak discloses a gaming apparatus that display payouts from 1-4 coins played and a jackpot or enhanced payout with a max of 5 coins wagered (Fig. 1, Col. 7:15-21). It would have been obvious of one of ordinary skill at the time of invention to modify the gaming apparatus such that the base payout display is displayed as well as the bonus payout display, as taught by Stupak. Providing a payout table give the player the feeling of winning potential earnings prior to playing the game.

**Claims 18-19, 24-26:** It is conventional in the art that players receive a certain percentage or multiple earnings based on the amount waged and/or the profit gained by the sponsor. Walker does not disclose that the potential bonus earnings are 25,000, 100,000, 250,000, or 1,000,000 times the amount wagered. Stupak discloses a video

poker game where the earnings are more than 250,000 times the amount wagered (Fig. 6). It would have been an obvious matter of design choice to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify Walker's bonus such that the potential bonus winnings at least 250,000 times the wager, as disclosed by Stupak. At the time the invention was made, it would have been an obvious matter of design choice to a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify Walker's invention, as stated above, because Applicant has not disclosed that such a modification provides an advantage, is used for a particular purpose, or solves a stated problem.

Therefore, it would have been prima facie obvious to modify Walker to obtain the invention as specified in Claims 18-19, 24-26 because such a modification would have been considered a mere design consideration which fails to patentably distinguish over the prior art of Walker.

**Claim 20:** Walker discloses linked gaming machines with progressive jackpots (§ 7).

**Claim 21:** Fig. 5 illustrates the use of the decrementing timer (§ 89).

**Claims 22-23:** Stupak's video poker game displays at least 4 enhanced payouts and a payout for identical cards (Fig. 1).

### ***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments filed 04/21/2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Examiner agrees with Applicant's rationale that Walker is intended and primarily drawn towards team play, nowhere in Walker does explicitly suggest that the bonus game only be applied to team play. Examiner agrees that the excerpts cited are drawn toward team play, but it does not say that it cannot be played in stand-alone.

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Walker discloses a slot machine (includes video poker, video blackjack, and keno machines (§ 36)), in which **a player** places a wager to initiate a game of video poker (§ 84). If the final hand matches any of the bonus hands indicated in the bonus database and displayed on the gaming apparatus **the player qualifies for a time dependent bonus game** and the bonus game is initiated, otherwise play is repeated (§ 86-87; Fig. 5). The bonus initiating hands are also amongst the bonus hands needed to be obtained within the bonus (§ 86-89). If a bonus initiating hand is obtained bonus play timers are initiated and player(s) must obtain a predetermined **number of equivalent bonus hands (e.g. the bonus initiating hands)** within the predetermined time period. Upon the bonus winning outcome **a player** is awarded a bonus payout (§ 92). **Walker discloses that the a single player that obtains all of the hands necessary to fulfill the bonus conditions receives the only bonus or enhanced payout resulting from meeting the bonus conditions (§ 64).** This is interpreted as a player can initiate the bonus and that player can receive the enhanced payout if the player fulfills the bonus conditions, which furthermore means that although in team play the outcomes correspond to a player achieving outcomes independently of the other players e.g. like stand-alone play (*a player can obtain a bonus initiating hand and play the bonus wherein the player has to obtain the equivalent hand within a predetermined time in order to obtain the bonus award*). Although Walker is primarily drawn to team play, Walker discloses that in the event that the player does not choose to play in team play the player may engage in stand-alone play at the same machine (§ 55). This implies that a player can play the bonus in a stand-alone mode



e.g. by him or herself without team play. However, one of ordinary skill would be inclined to modify the invention towards standalone play to satisfy players that prefer standalone play as well as team play. **Examiner agrees that Walker suggests an invention primarily drawn to providing a gaming environment for team play, but Walker does not exclude the fact that some players prefer not to play in a team environment and would rather play in a stand-alone mode. Walker is not intended to take away the bonus game from people with such preferences, but is intended to simply promote team play. However, provisions to accommodate players who prefer not to engage in team play would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.**

In regards to claim 4, please see above, which further clarifies the rejection. It is noted that no arguments were presented with respect to claims 16-26. It can only be assumed applicant acquiesces in this rejection.

### ***Conclusion***

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

**Taylor (US 2004/0102238) and Gomez (US 2005/0014547) both teach stand-alone gaming machine including bonus games with timers.**

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Tramar Harper whose telephone number is (571) 272-6177. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:30am - 5:00pm.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Robert Pezzuto can be reached on (571) 272-6996. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Ronald Laneau/  
Primary Patent Examiner  
Art Unit 3714

TH

07/21/08